

Big Cat Rescue



Overview

Location	Closest town: Vaalwater (about 50km away), Limpopo Province, South Africa.
Duration	From 2 - 12 weeks.
Dates	All year round.
Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Minimum age: 18.• You must have an Upper Intermediate level of English.• Special skills: You must have a love for nature and animals.
Your impact	 <p>The impact of your volunteer work depends on the nature of the project. In addition, it may also depend on whether the project offers a full volunteering experience or a combination of volunteering and tourism. For details, please see the description of the project and what's included in the project fees.</p>
Documents required	Enrolment form, curriculum vitae, letter of motivation, passport copy, proof of medical insurance.
Day of arrival	Every 2 nd Tuesday (dates see below).
Day of departure	Tuesday.



Highlights

- Work up close with a large variety of South Africa's wildlife.
- Work on the groundbreaking Lion Rescue project.
- Make a difference to animals' lives.
- Visit the Kruger National Park for excursions.
- Learn more about animals and tracking.
- Make new friends from all over the world.

Project information

The Big Cat Rescue project is situated on a 5000ha private estate in the Vaalwater region of the Limpopo province, South Africa.

The Big Cat Rescue project made headline news around the world on 1 May 2016 when they received 33 big cats from the Animal Defenders International (ADI) rescue centres in Peru and Columbia. The rescue was part of ADI's Operation Spirit of Freedom, and the lion relocation was the biggest animal airlift of its kind. These 33 lions were added to the 7 lions and 2 tigers which already call this centre home.

The project is also partnered with a lion sanctuary in Amsterdam, Netherlands, and has received five lions from this sanctuary. These sanctuaries are a temporary home for retired circus animals, animals that have had to leave zoos for various reasons and animals rescued from poor living conditions. The Big Cat Rescue project and these international organisations share the goal of providing older cats and cats with handicaps the opportunity to live in relative freedom and peace in gated natural reserves.

It is currently home to 42 big cats, including 40 lions and 2 tigers. The climate and environment at the project is ideal for the cats where they live in the 'semi-wild' in large enclosures in the natural African habitat of the Vaalwater region.

This area lies on the southern-edge of the Waterberg biosphere reserve, which has a stunning mix of habitats including mountainous regions, rolling grasslands, forests, cliff caves and river gorges. The region is also home to a variety of indigenous mammals such as lion, buffalo, giraffe and White rhino.

The Big Cat Rescue project has a no-breeding policy and female lions receive contraceptive medication so that they can remain with their mates. Males may also undergo vasectomies to make 100% sure that no lions are bred in captivity.

This is a premium project in a very remote area. The accommodation, food and experience are first class, but candidates must realize the remoteness of the project location, and know that they will have little to no contact with busy cities and towns, and will spend nearly all of their time located on site for the duration of their project. We recommend volunteers to plan trips and tours after their experience, and we at Good Hope Volunteers can help with these bookings.

There is a maximum of 8 volunteers at any given time, so make sure to book in advance as this is a very popular project.



Programme details

The Big Cat Rescue project gives you an opportunity to experience and assist with this incredible international cause, and also get involved in the “game farm” first hand, and assist with all game related day-to-day tasks.

Your work schedule

Your work schedule does vary depending on the weather and the tasks needed at the organization, but generally you work 10 days on and 4 days off. Stays of more than 2 weeks are recommended.

A possible work schedule could be:

- 07.00 Breakfast.
- 07.45 Load vehicle for morning feeding of animals.
- 08.00 – 09.00 Morning feeding.
- 09.00 – 12.30 Daily duties including refreshing water and hay, cleaning of enclosures, stimulating of lions and tiger through scent, and monitoring of their wellbeing. Fence checks and maintenance.
- 13.00 – 14.00 Lunch.
- 14.00 Meat preparation for the following day and cleaning of cold/freezer rooms.
- Afternoon activities vary and depend on the weather; sometimes it is too hot to be outside. The farm and the other animals that live there need care and attention too.
- From 18.00 Dinner and free time.

Please note this project can be hard work, it is labour intensive and quite tiring. Most volunteers choose to get to bed early with a good book or a movie.

Your role

You will have the unique opportunity to get involved in the day-to-day running and operations of the sanctuary and farm.

The Emoya Big Cat Sanctuary is a priority and the early morning checks and late afternoon feeds and checks happen every day. Other farm work varies a lot:

- Doing morning checks.
- Checking electrical fence.
- Cleaning fences.
- Cleaning enclosures.
- Providing enrichment.
- Preparing meat.
- Doing morning feeds.
- Doing animal observation.
- Providing assistance to veterinary care when needed.
- Building and upgrading enclosures.

PLEASE NOTE: the project allows no interaction between volunteers and the big cats.

Other possible activities might be:

Game management

- Game counts
- Game movement
- Parasite control
- Distributing of feed and licks for the animals

General farm maintenance

- Invasive species eradication
- Bush clearing
- Soil erosion management
- Enhancement of natural grazing
- Fence patrols and repairs
- Road maintenance and repairs
- Fire control during dry months

Website and social media updates

- Compilation of weekly newsletters
- Assisting with filming
- Placement of trail cameras

The project is a working farm with sheep, cattle and game. You may have the opportunity to work with the livestock as well as get a taste of general farm maintenance.

Please also note the project discourages the use of photography of the big cats as these animals have been treated very poorly in the past and flash photography often reminds them of where they have come from. The project will explain when and where is a good time to take candid photographs and allow you those special moments. But please be sensitive to this fact.

It is important to note that this description serves as an example only. The daily tasks and challenges depend on the volunteer, the time of year and the work that needs to be done. The final job description can therefore vary substantially from the above.

Getting to and from the project



The Big Cat Rescue project is based in the pristine wilderness of the Waterberg biosphere nature reserve in the Limpopo Province of South Africa.

You need to arrive on a Tuesday (see dates below) at OR Tambo International Airport. Airport pick-ups will be offered between 11:00 and 14:00.

Departure transfers to the airport are also offered on Tuesdays between 11:00 and 14:00.



For arrivals and departures outside the scheduled times, you need to book a private transfer at your own expense.

After an orientation on Tuesday you will start your volunteering on the next day.

Arrival dates 2017:

10 Jan, 24 Jan, 7 Feb, 21 Feb, 7 Mar, 21 Mar, 4 Apr, 18 Apr, 2 May, 16 May, 30 May, 13 June, 27 June, 11 July, 25 July, 8 Aug, 22 Aug, 5 Sept, 19 Sept, 3 Oct, 17 Oct, 31 Oct, 14 Nov, 28 Nov.

Accommodation

The accommodation of this premium project is very comfortable. You share a safari-style tent with an ensuite bathroom with a second volunteer. The accommodation offers a dining room, a lounge, bomas, a library, view rooms, lapas, etc. In your downtime you can indulge in unwinding in a glorious swimming pool as well as play a number of board games. Bedding as well as towels are provided. Laundry service is available 2 times per week.

WiFi is available in communal areas with limited access – downloading of music, movies, etc. is not permitted.

The Big Cat Sanctuary is within walking distance of your accommodation. Other parts of the farm are about 2 to 15km away – daily transport will be provided.

Meals

Three meals are provided each day. Breakfast includes cereals, yogurt, muesli, and seasonal fruit salad. At lunch, sandwiches, pasta and salads are available. For dinner you will be provided with a fully cooked meal, or a braai will be prepared (this could happen frequently). All meals are eaten together in the lapa or outside boma.

A vegetarian option is available and it is also possible to cater for special dietary requirements (within limits).

Free time

In your free time you can spend some time together with other volunteers, read a book, play board games, etc. You will have the opportunity to be part of drumming circles, boma fires, games, movie and stargazing evenings as well as night drives.

Because of the project location only the usage of the weekly town trips are suggested! It is essential that volunteers are animal and nature lovers as the project and the programme will not be suitable for party loving / clubbing / pubbing people!

Good Hope Volunteers will help you book other activities before and after your project should you wish to explore more in the area.



Local transport

Transport is available to take the volunteers into town for purchases once a week (to Vaalwater, +/- 50km, and every alternative week to Lephale, +/- 80km). Any other transport must be organised at your own expense.

The project will give you an opportunity to stop at a shop during your drive in from the airport. Urgent necessities can be arranged by the project on their weekly visits into the nearest town.

What to bring

Here is a list of packing suggestions, but remember you can always buy anything you have forgotten here in South Africa.

Pack light; check the weather – South Africa is capable of going through three different seasons in one day. It can be scorching hot during the day and very cold at night.

Items you would need are:

- Binoculars
- Camera
- Water bottles
- Safari Clothing (Light cool tops and long pants/shorts, or trousers in summer. Remember, even in summer the evenings can be slightly cool so do pack a jacket, preferable a jacket that can withstand the rain. South African winters are sunny and can become very hot when you are driving around in a vehicle, or sitting in direct sunlight. Consider packing short sleeve tops as well as cardigans and jackets to give you the option to layer up or down. It is best to pack comfortable clothes in natural and dark colors.
- Don't pack anything you don't mind getting dirty or damaged. Bright colors are NOT recommended in the African bush, shorts that are too short and tops that are too small are generally found to be inappropriate for volunteering.
- Mosquito & bug repellent
- Sunblock (an essential ALL year round)
- Sunglasses that are polarized to counteract the glare
- Sun hat
- Phone, phone charger and electronic plug converter
- Earphones and music player
- Small hand bag/backpack
- Torch/flashlight with extra batteries
- Good walking shoes/sneakers
- Toiletries
- Small medical kit
- Books/magazines and games

Here is a special list of things that are VERY useful for the Big Cat Rescue project:

- Bag of catnip
- Two+ bottles of food flavoring or herbs and spices for the big cats (avoid strong scents like peri-peri, pepper, etc.)
- Essential oils like rosemary, lavender, palmarosa, peppermint and eucalyptus oil.



While there is no specific uniform, volunteers are asked to wear sensible clothing, e.g. long shorts and closed shoes. Hot pants, string bikinis and flip-flops are not suitable for work.

Medical insurance

It is required that you take out medical insurance before travelling to South Africa. For stays exceeding 90 days, it is compulsory to take out a South African medical insurance. We recommend NetworX from Compcare, which is specifically designed for people who visit South Africa for 3 to 12 months. You will receive an information leaflet and an application form together with your confirmation of booking.

Health

No vaccinations are required except for travellers going to the north-eastern areas of South Africa, where anti-malaria precautions are recommended. Clients should consult their doctor for recommendations.

A yellow fever certificate is compulsory for those persons who have travelled from, or intend travelling through, countries in the yellow fever belt:

Africa: Angola, Burundi, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, Gambia, Gabon, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sudan, Rwanda, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, Zaire.

South America: Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, French Guyana, Guyana, Panama, Peru, Surinam, Venezuela, Argentina and Paraguay.

Bring medication just in case you suffer from any travel-related illnesses, e.g. stomach upsets, since your body needs to adjust to the change in food and water during your first few days in South Africa.

It is important to keep in mind at all times that HIV and Aids are widespread diseases in South Africa.

You do not require antimalarial medication for this project. However consult your doctor before your trip as this project is located on the border of a malaria area. Please note antimalarial medication can sometimes mask the symptoms of malaria, so if you choose NOT to take antimalarial medication, you should contact a doctor immediately if you feel ill on or after the project. It is also advisable that you consider a tetanus vaccination or check to see if your current tetanus vaccination is still effective. Please contact us at Good Hope Volunteers should you have any questions about this.

Safety

While all safety precautions are followed, you are still working with wild animals and must be aware at all times and follow the safety guidelines.

Cultural diversity

We suggest doing some light reading regarding the history of South Africa and its people. Please note it is a very ethnically diverse population, and there are many different groups of people with different ideas and behaviors. We suggest being as open minded as you can - try understand the history and note that in



rural areas the differences can be more pronounced. Please try to be modest in what you wear and how you behave.

What's included / not included

Included:

- Project placement
- Airport transfer on arrival and departure (OR Tambo International Airport)
- Accommodation (shared safari-style tent, breakfast, lunch and dinner, laundry)
- Town trip once a week
- T-shirt & a cap
- An orientation at the beginning of your volunteering
- Local support, including a 24-hour emergency number
- Electronic certificate (printed copy on request)
- WiFi

Not included:

- Any other transport
- Excursions

Visa

You can volunteer in South Africa on a visitor's visa for up to 90 days.

Nationals from certain countries (e.g. Brazil, Switzerland, Germany, Australia, France, Netherlands, Spain) will receive their visa when entering South Africa. Other nationals need to apply for a visitor's visa at a South African Embassy in their home country before travelling.

If you come to South Africa on a visitor's visa, you can extend once by another 90 days.

If you plan to come for more than 90 days, you need to apply for a visa at a South African Embassy in your home country.

For the latest information contact the South African Embassy or Good Hope Volunteers.